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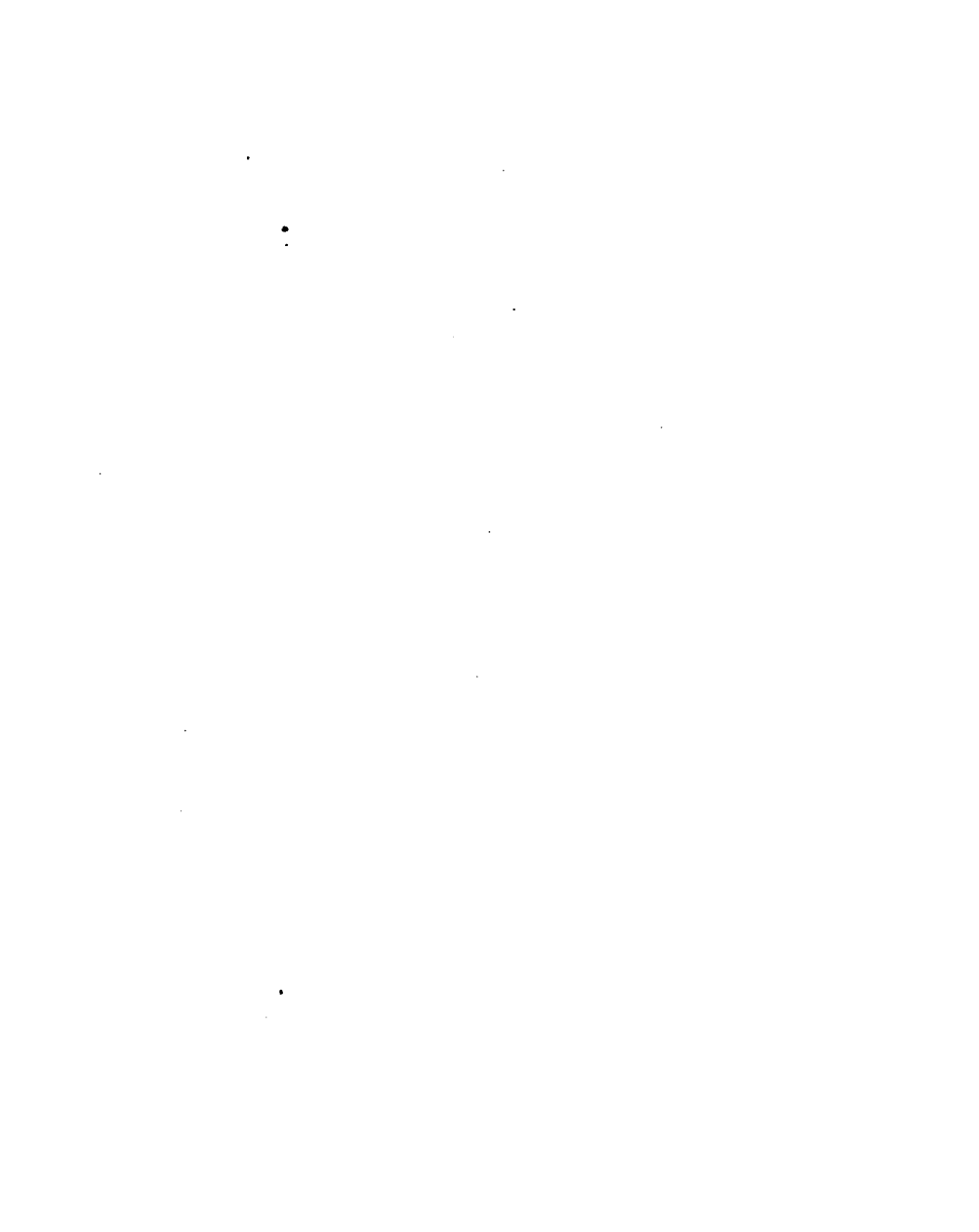
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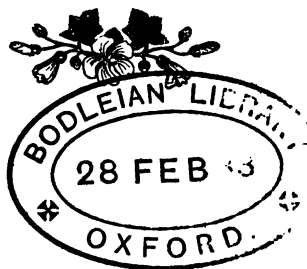
ARE YOU HAPPY?
REALLY HAPPY?





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ARE YOU HAPPY: REALLY HAPPY?

THERE is nothing new in the question which gives a name to the little work now placed before the public. Since the world was, has any inquiry oftener presented itself to each man than this? Neither is it a novelty that the rich and the great are supposed to be happy. As a rule, do not the poor and the obscure covet their supposed happiness? But, in the conversations now brought before the public, a striking *fact* is presented: viz., a meeting of eight old

friends, long separated; brought together in the same town, from, apparently, what men call chance, but which we reverently trace to an all-powerful and all-wise Providence. These friends were all called the favoured, the happy of their day; and yet, after confessing to each other their most secret feelings, an unexpected discovery is made. It may be, my reader's heart may also be startled. I have derived so much benefit by the perusal of the conversations, that I fain would hope a similar effect will be produced on the minds of others. To state exactly when and where the friends met is out of my power; but, judging from several circumstances, I should say three or four years have elapsed, and that the scene lay in one of the large towns in France, —perhaps in Paris itself. I became

acquainted with the work under peculiar circumstances. The value of the conversations lies in the fairly true picture given of the moral state of those usually considered as virtuous and benevolent men of the world. The details may, in part, savour of fiction; but of the facts themselves, from my entire confidence in the person who handed me the MSS., I cannot doubt.

Though bound to secrecy as to the names of the parties concerned, I have no difficulty in stating that all moved in what is called good society. Probably they belonged outwardly to various Christian sects. Assuredly most of them were of those who occupy themselves but little with the "one thing needful."

If any of my readers belong to that class,

may it please God so to touch their hearts, as they peruse this little work, that they shall be led to exclaim, "Let *us* meditate on the end of our days, and on the future state of our souls."

Were it not that I trace each event to an all-wise Creator, I should have said that chance brought me to a town where had arrived, only a short time before me, seven old friends, from whom I had been separated for many long years. It is scarcely necessary to say that we were all moving in what is called good society: that we were what the world would call moral men. Nay, with one exception, not opposed to religion; and even he, to a certain extent, abstained from bringing his unbelieving views before us. We met continually; and, as each time

our intimacy was strengthened, it will easily be understood how our hearts opened out, and we desired to make known to each other our past experiences.

We chose a morning for this purpose which found us all at leisure, with the exception of Dr. C——, who promised to join us later. It was agreed that Mr. A—— (a rich and well-known banker in Paris) should take the lead. And he began as follows:—

“You all know that I have attained my sixty-third year, and that it is now long since I retired from a calling which enabled me, after twenty years of toil, to realize a comfortable income. To this I had looked forward ; and, when accomplished, I married. With my wife and children I had a right to think myself happy.”

"But were you really so?" exclaimed one of the Banker's auditors.

"I fancied I was," was the reply; "but the feeling did not last. In my domestic circle nothing was wanting, yet I was not satisfied. By way of excitement I speculated, and, though with some trouble and anxiety, succeeded in increasing my income. Travelling was my next resource. Many are the countries and cities which I have visited, and assuredly with great and varied enjoyment. Yet—yet,—shall I own it?—even this palled on me. More than once I found myself exclaiming, in school-boy language, *Cui bono?* Of what use is all this? And even now—yes, let me freely confess it—all around me seems so small, so superficial. I look at the magnificent collection of pictures, which cost

me such fabulous sums, and even with these I am not satiated. As I gaze at the inanimate canvas, my heart exclaims, 'You will outlive your owner.' I think of my age,—so near the usual term of man's life,—and all around me—that which I see, which I hear, which I do—has but one voice, 'You are leaving us.' And as I listen, I despise."

"You are a philosopher, dear A—," remarked Colonel B—, "and I admire you for the same; for, on the word of a soldier, I shall arrive at the same conclusion as yourself. The account of *my* past life, gentlemen, will be concise.

"A conscript at eighteen, I delighted in my profession. And a joyous life is that of camps and barracks. I cannot regret the youthful days thus passed, for I do believe

that life was not enjoyed only, but, in some ways, made useful.

"I have seen service; and the loss of one arm tells you the bullets cared not for me. But 'tis thus promotion is gained. And from grade to grade I rose, before the age of forty-seven, to the rank now mine, and which I have enjoyed for the last fourteen years. Seven years ago I left the service. Room should be given to younger men. Besides, it was but fair to rest. This I now do, surrounded by my children and my grandchildren."

"But, Colonel," exclaimed more than one voice, "can *you* say you are perfectly happy?"

"Happy! happy!" replied the soldier. "Easy enough to say; but I am called to confess, and frankness is expected from me."

Well, then, here is my reply: No, no, gentlemen, and the reason I will state.

“After one of our severest encounters with the enemy, I was, with some of my men, walking over the field of battle. Here and there dead and wounded were strewn. At once I ordered my men to carry the latter where aid could be procured. Left alone, as I thought, with the dead, a cry of suffering reached my ears. Turning round, I found that it proceeded from one of our enemies,—an officer of rank. I lifted him partly up, and strove to staunch the blood which flowed profusely from his head; at the same time, spoke to him in terms of tenderness and encouragement.”

“‘Thank you—thank you,’ he gasped out; ‘but—it is too late—too late. I am dying.’ Still I strove to encourage him. He opened

his eyes, gazed at me, with a look not easily forgotten, and replied, 'The end must come. Ah, remember this, it is not far!' With these words he expired.

" 'The end must come.' Gentlemen, these words have never left me. Twelve years have elapsed since dying lips uttered them, and yet to-day even they seem to sound wherever I go, and from every occupation and recreation in which I engage. Last night, for instance, I was with yourselves at the magnificent ball given by the Prefect. Well,—do not laugh at me,—I heard *those* words in the exquisite music. And when that lovely Countess C——, the queen of the fascinating assemblage, observed to me, in her winning tones, how young, how strong I still appeared, I assure you, I seemed to expect that those words

would be followed by, 'The end must come.'

"Let me explain myself more fully. I, who never thought of the future,—no: not even in the most dangerous battles,—who thought that glory and fortune once obtained were mine for ever, am roused, as it were, out of a dream,—a delusion. 'The end must come' is for ever in my ears. Nothing, nothing silences those words. They haunt, they oppress me; and not a day passes without this reflection, 'In a little while—a very little while—what will these titles, these honours, these decorations avail me?' No, my friends: I am not happy. I am not peaceful. Even if I attain to an advanced age, the end must come."

"The Colonel is right," exclaimed one

of the party. "Whether we will or no, the end must come to each of us. And there is nothing lively in such an anticipation."

"Certainly not," replied the Banker. "And yet I cannot understand it. But there is one of our friends, absent from us just now, who, when speaking of the end of life, does so as if it were a day of rejoicing. I allude to our dear Doctor C——. If one man more than another is assured that the end *must* come, it is he, who is acquainted with the wonderful workings of the human frame. And yet, I ask you all, do we know any one as happy, as peaceful as this dear friend? Always calm, always gentle; and if he speaks of death, doing so as the schoolboy does in the prospect of his holidays. Perhaps he will explain this mystery to us."

"He did not always think as he does now," said the Colonel. "Not two years ago, his answer to a remark I made on happiness evinced the state of his mind. Well do I recollect his grave and penetrating look, as he said, 'Yes, yes: I am happy,—contented when I have been able to do some good. But this does not last. There must be something more solid, more satisfying than this to rest on. For, after all, the end of even a life of benevolence must come. Aye: and that soon.'

"But we are forgetting, gentlemen, that all our friends have not as yet spoken. My dear G——, it is your turn."

G—— was a statesman of the highest diplomatic talent. Nay, he was, I may say, the most gifted man of our day. In addition to his searching and penetrating

mind, he was renowned for his philanthropy, which sought out and benefited whole countries. He had already attained the age of sixty-six, although strangers would not have thought him more than fifty.

"My dear Colonel," replied G——, "forgive me if I say that you seem unwarrantably struck by that dying officer's words, and that, probably, both you and our dear Doctor lean a little to superstition. Still there is a truth in your statements which I am far from overlooking. My career has been neither as brilliant nor as dangerous as yours."

"But," quickly interrupted the Colonel, "are you happier than I am? That is the question. Tell us your history."

Our diplomatist began thus,—

"At the age of twenty-three I became

private secretary to an ambassador. It appeared that I satisfied expectations, for eighteen months had scarcely elapsed, when a post of great confidence was assigned me; and for three years I remained at the Court of Sweden. At the expiration of that time I returned to France, and married. I need not tell my old friends how honourably my children are placed, or that, raised to the office of prime minister, I have had several most difficult missions to fulfil. Up to the present all has gone well with my family, and with myself. Most ungrateful to Providence should I be if I did not thank heaven for such prosperity."

"You are happy, then," said the Colonel: "quite happy?"

"Yes—and—No," was the answer. "I am happy when I look at my social position:

I am young for my years, have no great anxieties, my children are all prospering, and in less than two years it is my purpose to retire from public life, and to settle with my wife, who is still in the enjoyment of health and activity, at one of my country seats. All this comes under the head of happiness: does it not, Colonel?"

"But," replied the officer, "we have only had the rendering of your 'Yes.' Now for your 'No.'"

"Well," continued the Statesman, "that unfortunate 'No.' I mean—I must own if I now speak of my inner life—I am *not* what is called happy."

"Not happy!" exclaimed M——, a celebrated savant and poet. "Not happy! Why, what is there lacking in your cup?"

"Nothing, I again repeat, as regards

outward things," was the reply. "But—but—well, say what you will,—I, too, often ask myself, 'What will be the issue, the end, of this bright and attractive present?'"

"Come, come, dear friend," again exclaimed the Savant, "you are going too far. Who warns you to trouble yourself about the future? Have you not, at least, twenty-five years of enjoyment before you? And twenty-five years, my dear fellow! Why, 'tis a lifetime!"

"Be it so," gravely answered the Statesman. "But even with this extension to my life, the end,—the silent, the solemn, the certain end,—this it is which pre-occupies my mind; if not as much as it does that of the Colonel, in any case, sufficiently so to make me seriously thoughtful."

He then turned towards the Poet near him, and added,—

“What think you, my friend? The most touching verses in your striking meditations cannot add one line—one solitary line—to the rest of my career, already written down in the book of fate.”

The Poet's answer was a low murmur, and our Statesman continued, in a decisive tone,—

“Yes: I again and again repeat, happiness is not mine. Like a spider's web seems all which I touch or undertake.”

“But, dear and excellent friend,” interrupted the Banker, “you cannot call that a spider's web which has spread comfort and prosperity over so many villages and hamlets. Remember the thousands you have rescued from misery and ruin. Surely

the remembrance of such deeds must impart a lasting, as well as deep, gratification to your heart."

"I am thankful to heaven," modestly replied the Minister, "for the opportunities afforded me to benefit my fellows. After all, gentlemen, to relieve and assist the poor and the industrious is, on the part of those who have means at their command, only an act of simple justice. I cannot see that to store up my gold and silver, rather than to sow it, as it were, among my fellow-men, would have been enjoyment. Which of you, my friends, does not know by experience how preferable to the most brilliant and flattering objects life can present to us, is the saving a family from misery, the establishing of a school, or the erection of a church for a neglected population,—nay,

the distribution of food and raiment to impoverished artisans?"

"Most true," replied A——, in a tone which told that the words came from his heart. "And, for that very reason, I say that you do wrong—really wrong—in calling all this a spider's web."

"Nay," said the Statesman: "I have not been sufficiently explicit. I meant not these particular deeds. It is the *tout ensemble*, this life of mere earthly interests. Pure, excellent as are works of love, they must cease. And, besides, there is so much self-pleasing in every one of them. Oh, how I feel this! And from my very heart sighs escape, as this truth forces itself on me. Suppose, if you will, that I may still count on twenty years more of life: how quickly these will pass!"

"For my part," said the Poet, with a look of radiant enthusiasm, "ideas like yours never trouble me. No, no: thanks to my lucky star,—each of us has one,—I have never distressed myself in this manner."

"Your history: your history!" exclaimed several voices.

"My history, gentlemen," answered the Poet, "is that of a man who, knowing a little of his own capacity, has somewhat profited by the same.

"I went to college. Who is there who does otherwise? From thence I passed on to the University, which is the making of many a man. I loved books, and I read much. I also loved writing, and spared not my pen. Very soon, from various quarters, I was called a genius, a poet, a savant, and I know not what more. Foolishly or wisely,

I believed all this. Sometimes I was to be found at the University; at others, at the Institute, or in some of the many literary saloons of our Capital. And when the booksellers, with much deference, asked for my MS., I ceded these to them, to do what they would with them.

"Frankly I own that all this flattered me not a little. And the end was that, *bon gré, mal gré*, I thought somewhat of myself, the more that plaudits, from high and low, were my portion whenever I was persuaded to address or recite."

"And you deserved all this praise," interrupted the Statesman. "Go on: go on fearlessly. It will be for us to judge you, or, rather, to congratulate ourselves."

"My after-life has resembled my beginning, and my name is known a little every-

where; and this by essays, by reviews, by poems, by dramas, etc. And now,—not well knowing what to do with this name, unless it be to keep it; and with my money, unless it be to share it with those who have none—I live without anxiety, without care; welcomed, and more than welcomed, wherever I go. I cannot see why this state of things should not last, since I am still able, from time to time, to send forth tolerably striking works: works which the public continue to praise and seek after.”

“The public only does you justice,” remarked the Statesman. “You deserve your laurels; and those who lay these crowns at your feet do honour to themselves.”

“All this is very well,” said the Colonel; “but let our dear Poet answer me with the candour of a little child, when I ask him *the*

question put to each of us. Is he happy: quite happy?"

Looking down, and slightly coughing, the Poet ejaculated, more to himself than to his inquirer, "Quite happy! That is a strong term."

"Ah, I have you, Poet!" rejoined the Colonel. "You are now going to explain those two words; and that without mental reservation."

"Those words," continued the Poet, "mean that about eight days ago, when one of my little grandsons said, as he kissed me, 'Grandpapa, what joy it is to see you still so well!' I felt almost angry; nay, that I grumbled, if not scolded, when, later in the day, I saw, on passing a mirror, that my hair was getting absolutely white."

"Which, being interpreted," answered the

Colonel, "means that, much against your own will, your own desire, you feel that the end is approaching, and that all your profound writings, and your most beautiful verses, will not prevent your knees from failing, or your teeth from perishing."

"Colonel," exclaimed the Banker, "your words are very matter of fact."

"They are those of a soldier," answered the officer. "Better be outspoken; specially on such subjects as those before us. Besides, I feel sure our dear Poet does not think me very much in the wrong."

"So far from this," was the Poet's answer, holding out his hand at the same time to the Colonel, "I am forced to own that all my success, all the praise, all the adoration given me, have never satisfied me. I thirst after something more. Do you wish that I

should give you a proof of this? Listen, then. Perhaps you may have heard what took place at the Institute the last time my 'Meditations' were read there."

"Yes," replied the Statesman, with courtesy: "we heard you were received with triumphal honours."

"Ah, a triumph indeed! And yet, excited as I was with the same, I could not help saying to my wife, who was, as you may suppose, elated by it, 'Of what good is all this to me?' And, when left alone, I began to examine myself. Soon, to my utter shame, I saw that self-love, with its false halo, was encircling me around. This 'great man,'—forgive me, gentlemen, for repeating this praise. I do it with a purpose,—this 'great man' is pretty well on a par with his angola cat, who purrs and

sleeps whilst his master's hand softly passes down his back."

"Poet, Poet," interrupted one of us, "do not so misrepresent yourself!"

"My dear friend," answered the Poet, "what else but self-love is this pleasure when we are praised? This vanity, this self-satisfaction: is it a whit better than my cat's approval of my caresses? And if even now, whilst I stand on the slippery steps of an academical ladder, I realize this, what of the future?"

"Poet," remarked the Banker, with emphasis, "a name which immortalizes itself cannot die. The whole world is affected by it."

With an air of disgust the Poet replied,—

"And of what use is this to a man who is dead? Besides, the world remembers as

vividly the names of the veriest monsters of vice and cruelty. No: I want none of this kind of immortality. If there are dreamers,—nay, let me give them their right name,—fools who seek after it, to them I leave it. My happiness lies not there. And, as most truly remarked the Colonel, that implacable ‘end must come’—and that alone—is reality. And it is this final result—yes, gentlemen, I own it from my heart—which prevents me from being happy: quite happy.”

Here he was interrupted by a gay and careless laugh from F——, a man of wit, and of most pleasing manners.

“Come, come, ye friends of mine, what is this melodrama you are all acting? Are you all met for the purpose of murmuring and calumniating this life of ours?”

"Calumniating!" exclaimed the Statesman.

"I can prove the truth of my assertion," continued F——. "What are these moanings, these fault-findings? What *is* there wanting to make us happy? True, the pleasures and the fascinations of youth are gone. Like yourselves, gentlemen, I carry the weight of sixty years on my shoulders, and can walk neither as firmly or as quickly as formerly. But what of that? My health is good; of gold and silver I have in abundance; friends welcome me; when I speak, I have attentive listeners; my words are quoted; to some I hope I am of use; and I am without one enemy; I can truly say nothing but pleasure and enjoyment, in the circle of devoted and numerous friends, await me. What more, then, can I desire?

And all this, and more, do you not all also possess?"

"Our dear F——," observed the Banker, "wishes us to understand that he lives only for the day."

"I think," said the Poet, "you ought to add that he is the life and soul of every party, every circle in which he is found, and that no one likes to lose his anecdotes and his verses."

"Well, gentlemen," exclaimed the man of wit, "is this nothing? All I desire is that it may last for many a long year."

"And after that?" observed the Colonel.

"After! after! What matters it?" deridingly asked F——.

"None of that nonsense, if you please," sternly remarked the Colonel. "No, no: let neither of us say, What matters it? We

have a soul, we know it, we cannot deny it; and for that soul there *is* a hereafter."

"Be it so, dear friend," replied F—. "But why mar present happiness, present enjoyment with a fear, an anxiety, which, after all, may be without foundation?"

"Allow me to say a few words," said the Banker. "You are, dear F—, and I congratulate you on it, still strong and full of life; but how do you know that this will last for fifteen years; nay, for ten years? You have heard of what happened the other day to General K—: how, as he was entering his carriage to be present at that famous banquet, he dropped down dead, from an attack of apoplexy. Ah, surely in your heart of hearts you have said to yourself, 'Such a thing might happen to me! As quickly, as unexpectedly might

the plank on which I now tread so firmly break down!"

"Not so fast, my friend, if you please," was the smiling retort of F—. "I am very prudent, take great care of myself, and, without speaking too smoothly to myself, I feel sure that my plank is firm and strong for many years to come."

"In point of fact," interrupted the Colonel, "your happiness, my dear fellow, at best is but insecure."

"Well, well," said F—, in a playful tone, "say it is so; nay, that mine is a foolish hope,—at all events, it makes me happy: quite happy. Surely I am the wise man of our party."

"That word *quite*," observed the man of letters, "does not ring quite true. Tell me, dear F—, tell me, without mental reser-

vation, have you no wakeful nights, no moments of *ennui*, of fatigue, of regrets; nay, is there never a doubt as to the morrow's happiness? For instance,—forgive me for what I am about to say,—were you as gay, as contented after the evening when that young stranger guest engrossed the whole conversation, and was, in fact, the star of the evening? I was present. And as the walls echoed and re-echoed with the plaudits lavished on him, I caught the expression of your face, and, in consequence, in all straightforwardness, I have put my question. Tell me, do you not find some roughness; nay, some thorn, some sharp stone, small though it be, in your path of roses?"

"Ah," exclaimed F——, "you are too exacting,—too precise! Well,—if I must

own it,—yes: now and then I *am* vexed,—I am *ennuyed*. But what is to be done? The thing is unavoidable. It is a failing inseparable from our humanity. It cannot be helped, and so I pass over it.”

“And when you can no longer do that,” asked the Statesman, “where will be your happiness?”

“Well, it will end,” replied F——, with marked embarrassment.

“It will end,” exclaimed one of our friends, who up to the present moment had kept silence, although listening to all that passed with unwearied attention. He was the oldest of our party: a grave and wise judge, who had attained his seventy-fifth year, and to whom we looked with reverential esteem as our elder brother, if not as a father.

With a tone of solemnity, which marked him at all times, he repeated,—

“It will end, dear Mr. F——. And this you now hear not from a child, or a young man; but from an old man, nearing that solemn time. Allow me, then, gentlemen, for the sake of our dear, yet too thoughtless, F——, to make known a few of the thoughts which press on my mind.”

“Most willingly!” exclaimed several voices.

“I studied for the bar,” continued our old friend, “and never tried any other profession. Success crowned my efforts; and, as you are aware, when I retired, it was with a fortune larger than falls to the lot of the generality. What is lacking to make life happy? Nothing. I have a loving and amiable family, the esteem of friends,

honours and repose, and health to enjoy all these blessings."

"You are then happy, dear Judge?" asked the Colonel.

"Ah, dear friend, as I look at my hour-glass, with the sand quickly making its way to the bottom, I say to myself, 'Thus it is with me.' These grains, which man calls prosperity, renown, domestic affections, chosen friends, they pass away from day to day, and eventually disappear altogether. Yes: it is the same tale you have all already told. Yes: even our gay, thoughtless F——. You have all acknowledged, more or less openly, that true happiness cannot be coupled with such terms as those the voice of time continually utters: precarious, fugitive, uncertain, measured."

"From the depths of my heart do I

re-echo these words," said the Professor; "and yet like yourselves, my friends, I am surrounded by all that the world calls happiness: wealth, renown, domestic peace,—all are mine. Before I had attained the age of twenty, I was permitted to accompany those celebrated men sent out by our Government to make certain geological calculations, which, as these rendered our national commerce stable, immortalized their names. Having had some part in the above, and in other works undertaken by them, both in France and beyond the seas, honours and wealth were by degrees lavished on me. My family obtained high positions, and on all sides I received the praises of academies and institutions. And at this hour, my social position is as solid as it is glorious. My health, even at sixty-two, is still robust, so

that, without deluding myself, I may count on twenty years more of enjoyment."

"And yet you are not happy?" once again asked the Colonel.

"No, my friends, no: I am not. And what will surprise you is, that this arises from other causes besides the fact that I too, like our dear and venerable Judge, see that the sands of my life are running out, and that soon the last will fall."

"Ah, Professor, explain, explain!" exclaimed F——.

"I will," was the reply. "Like the Colonel, there are words which, falling as they did from a dying man, though not, as in the Colonel's case, on a field of battle, still resound in my ears.

"About seven years ago I received an urgent and earnest entreaty from an old

friend, with whom I had often travelled and studied, to come without delay to see him in the country home where he was living. At once I started, and, to my grief, found him on a bed of sickness. Oh, how changed was this bright, strong, energetic man! Though but fifty-three years of age, he looked more like a decrepit old man, so pale, so strengthless was he. 'See,' he gasped out, 'I am passing away, my friend, my friend! I beseech you, think not lightly of the end. Open your eyes to the reality of sin, and believe that God's curse is on it.'

Here the Professor was interrupted by the light-hearted F—— exclaiming, in a mocking tone,—

"Come, come, dear Professor: this savours of methodism. Your friend was a weak-

minded man, and you only too good-natured to listen to him."

"Weak-minded!" answered the Professor. "Be undeceived, my dear F——. No man had a stronger intellect than my friend, and all he uttered was in a tone of the deepest conviction and calmness. The second day of my arrival he spoke to me with even more solemnity. The next day he became so much worse, I was allowed to see him only for a few moments. I stood by his bed. Though unable to speak, his eyes were fixed intently on me. At last he feebly motioned me to draw near. I did so, bending down my ear to his mouth, when, with painful efforts, he gasped out, 'Judgment awaits you.' From that time articulation failed, and at night he passed away.

“Leaving his sorrowing family, I returned to mine, those words, ‘Judgment awaits you,’ sounding again and again in my ears. And oh, how often I have since uttered them to myself! Yes, my friends: I shall be judged. And by whom? By God. Yes: by God Himself. And it is because of this that I am not happy.”

“But, my dear Professor,” persisted F——, “even if this be so, what of it to *you*,—our model, our example in all things?”

He was interrupted by the Colonel, who, in a hasty tone, said,—

“Is there one of us who disbelieves this future judgment? Nay, does not your own heart feel the truth of this declaration?”

“Ah, well,” replied F——, with heightened colour, “all I say is, why should such a man as our Professor fear this judgment? I ask

you all, gentlemen, can we in the whole world find a man more full of integrity, of virtue, of purity, carried even to exaggeration, than our Professor?"

"My dear F——," answered the Professor, "at the bar of your affection I stand acquitted, and, believe me, I appreciate your opinion of me. But, my dear fellow, remember it is not before man's tribunal that we shall stand : it is before that of God. And who does not know, who does not feel that if God is holy, the very best among us cannot say that they have either done or spoken according to His requirements? Moreover, do we not also know that if God is good and pitiful, He is also just, and not one of us can say we are ignorant of His law?"

"But, my dear Professor," interposed our

Statesman, "let us not represent the Supreme Being to ourselves as an angry God; nay, as a Jupiter of thunder. As far as my own ideas are concerned, I see this Creator of the universe as one full of pity for mankind. If I, weak and imperfect as I am, feel moved with compassion towards my children,—how much soever they may err,—will not God be infinitely more pitiful? My dear Professor, set your mind at rest, for, believe me, God will never treat you with severity."

"My dear friend, a thousand times have I spoken similar language to myself; but conscience has a louder voice than these words of palliation, and she tells me I am guilty. Moreover, if my friend died at the age of fifty-three, how much nearer I am to the end of life, numbering, as I do, ten years more than he!"

"You are right," gravely observed the oldest of the party. "And I see more clearly than before that we all lack the one thing needful to make us happy."

"What is that one thing? What is it?" exclaimed the Statesman, as he fixed his eyes on the last speaker.

"It is,—I feel sure,—it is that of which I overheard my old coachman speak last night."

"What did he say?" inquired the Colonel.

"In a conversation he was holding with my valet, the old man said, 'You may make as much money as you will, Felix; but, if you are not a true Christian, your money will be nothing more than dust and ashes.'"

"So it comes to this at last," exclaimed F——, with a mocking smile; "that grand word Christian. What are we to infer from

it? Just this, that to be happy we are all to become devotees. Pish! As far as I am concerned, I declare——”

Here the entrance of Dr. C—— interrupted him; and the Doctor, after warmly shaking hands with all present, said, “I am very late, gentlemen; but the sick, and especially the poor sick, cannot be neglected. But what is the matter? You all look so serious. May I not know the cause?”

We at once gave him a sketch of what had passed, and dwelt particularly on the conclusion to which each had arrived.

“But,” added the Colonel, “with this one difference, our dear F—— thinks but little of the future, and our esteemed Professor dreads, even more than death, the judgment of God.”

“’Tis no light subject you have been treating,” was the Doctor’s answer.

"Well, well," hastily rejoined the Colonel.
"But, Doctor, give us your own history, and your opinion."

"With all my heart," was the reply; "but first allow me to say that two years ago my opinions would have been very much like yours. Yes: even somewhat resembling those of our dear Poet's, who,—will he allow me to add?—assumes more confidence in his than he really feels."

At this moment F—— addressed a few words in a low tone of voice to the Judge, to which the latter quickly replied,—

"Impossible! By no means: the soul does not perish."

The Doctor heard the words, and said,—

"Here lies the gist of the whole matter. No: my friends. No: the soul does not die. And from this fact sprang my first

serious impressions. Let me tell you how it occurred.

"It was at the University that the mercy of God first reached my heart; for—and I pray you to mark my words—it is always God's mercy, God's free grace, which awakens a soul, and ——"

"Doctor, Doctor," interrupted the Banker: "you promised to tell us your history, and instead of this you are giving us a moral essay."

The Doctor smiled and answered,—

"My history will be more or less in that line. Shall I go on?"

"Most certainly," was the exclamation of all.

The Doctor continued,—

"I had scarcely completed my twenty-fourth year, and was, as usual, assisting at

different operations, when the corpse of a suicide was brought in for dissection; and, as it lay on the table, one of our number, a professor of anatomy, lately arrived from afar, said in a solemn tone, 'I would not have my soul where I fear that unfortunate man by his criminal act has sent his.'

"There was a titter among the young surgeons, but the stranger only looked the more serious; and at last, fixing his eyes on one of the mocking group, said to him, 'Are any among us materialists?' The young man again smiled; but *I* was so impressed, so overcome, that as soon as I possibly could, I not only left the room, but hastened into a neighbouring forest, where alone I cried, in accents of almost despair, 'Where will my soul go?'"

“My dear Doctor,” observed F——, with a slight tone of contempt in his voice, “this surely was a weakness on your part ; nay, a superstition.”

“What a mistake you make, dear friend, in attaching superstitious ideas to me at that time. Did not my colleagues point to me as one impenetrably steeled against all which my reason could not analyse and fathom? and it was then my habit to ridicule all reverential remarks, and an amusement to me to parody in my songs any pietist I happened to meet?”

The Poet, with a slight tinge of satire exclaimed,—

“And so those few words changed you altogether and at once!”

In the gentlest tone Dr. C—— replied,—

“My dear Poet, when God delivers a man

from ignorance and unbelief there is no feebleness in His work."

Here the Banker interposed in a somewhat excited manner,—

"Gentlemen, I again repeat, it seems to me we are in a church instead of our private saloon; and, believe me, our dear Doctor—if we give him the liberty—is about to preach us a sermon."

"Well, let him do so," answered the Colonel. "I, for one, give him leave. Besides, gentlemen, he has promised us a sketch of his life, and, after all, each man has the past to recount."

The Doctor quietly continued,—

"Never did the impression I have already described fade away; and yet, as you can well believe, from that time of youth, to the sixty-five years I complete

this very day, my life has not been wanting in follies, and faults, and incidents; yet thanks be to God, He who was seeking and calling me, brought the thought of my soul's future state vividly before me: yea, in the midst of my worldliness, and the strong current of iniquity which carried me away."

"Stop, stop, my dear fellow," exclaimed the Poet: "this is going too far! Down-right exaggeration! You, Doctor: you stained with iniquity? Why, you talk like an ascetic; for, if you were not a model of purity and excellence,—and I say this without flattery,—who has ever been, or can hope to be, one?"

"I once thought myself very much what your kindness describes me, and not a little pride was mixed with this. I was a moral

man, faithful to my wife, and exerting myself for the best interests of my children; I was far from thinking there was aught more for me to do in order to please God. Hence I did not disclaim praise or respect. But this delusion was to end; and my heart lifts itself up in gratitude to God for waking me up from so long and so fearful a dream."

"But how was this done?" said the Colonel, quickly. "Tell us, tell us."

"This I will do," was the answer. "But bear in mind, gentlemen, that, even in the midst of all that conduced to happiness, my sentiments were similar to yours. Whilst I professed to be happy, and, before others, put on an expression of contented security, when alone, how often the thought pressed itself on me that in a moment an

accident, a reverse of fortune, or sudden bereavement, might crush me. Alas, I was to realize how true were my forebodings! But, forgive me, dear friends, for thus speaking of myself, and ——”

“My dear Doctor,” answered the Judge, “it is of yourself we wish to hear; and the more details you give us of your history, the better we shall be pleased.”

“The death of my eldest son, a young man, full of promise, which occurred suddenly in a foreign city, and the grievous effects of this sorrow on the health of my wife, more than ever convinced me that there was no peaceful security either in riches, or renown, or strength, or power of intellect; and over the grave of my child a voice seemed to say, ‘And what will be the fate of your soul?’”

Here the Poet interposed, and in a half angry tone. "Always, and again and again, your soul before you? What a monomania is yours! What possible fear can a man like you have: a man whose irreproachable life is a by-word?"

"Ah, my dear friend," replied the Doctor, "first my own heart told me I was not all others believed me to be, and next, I must relate to you, the check which my proud spirit received at the hands of a mere child. You remember the time when that dreadful disease, cholera, was striking terror into every heart. I had been sent for by a family of artisans. The mother had already succumbed, and two of the children were grievously ill. One of these was a peculiarly gifted youth of about fifteen, his personal beauty was striking,

not less so his intellectual power and the extreme loveliness of his character. The father was overwhelmed at the thought of losing him. 'If my Alexis is taken, what is to become of us?' he uttered in broken accents, and, as far as his emotion would allow, he began to tell me of his boy's gifts and graces.

"'Oh, my dear, dear father,' interrupted the youth, 'I implore you not to praise me as you do! What *seems* so beautiful without is not always so within. 'Tis the *heart* God looks at. And, dear father, how often He has detected sin where man could only see good.'

"Gentlemen, believe me, those words from that young artisan pierced me like an arrow. From that day I no longer had confidence in my so-called virtues and good deeds."

"Softly, softly, dear Doctor," was the Poet's reply. "Do not calumniate; or, at all events, do not depreciate virtue. It would seem, from your remarks, that one might as well be a careless and erring man, as one of probity and virtue. Surely you will allow that the latter is to be preferred to vice."

"Most certainly I do," answered the Doctor. "There is no one who values moral worth more highly than I do; but that, my dear Poet, does not do away with the truth of Alexis' remark. How often God calls that sin which we have called good! And, I conclude, we all know what that great Being, who cannot be deceived, pronounces on sin."

Here F——, bending his head to the Colonel, said in an undertone,—

"Tell me the rest another time." Then raising his voice, he added, "Excuse me, gentlemen, but an engagement, which I cannot put off, obliges me to leave you." And he hastily left the room.

The Colonel, in a tone of deep interest, said,—

"Dear Doctor, I beg you to go on."

"I am approaching," answered the Physician, "the turning point of my life; and, whilst I shall hide nothing from you, I beseech you all to give me your whole attention, and to bear patiently with me."

"Forgive me," observed the Judge, "if I interrupt you one moment. I cannot allow that a life of integrity is worth nothing. No, no, my dear friend: 'tis not thus I can bring all society on one level."

"Neither do I wish you should do so,"

replied the Doctor. "Like yourself, my dear Judge, I value honesty, order, submission to the laws, industry, sobriety; therefore, I beg you all to be assured that not in any way would I forget or lower a high standard of morality. But, my dear Judge, let me put one question to you. Do you think that the good conduct of a man in prison, who has been placed there for some crime, in any way affects the sentence justly passed on him by the jury; and that, in consequence of his orderly behaviour since his incarceration, the judgment for his past offence is to be put aside?"

Here the Banker impatiently interrupted the Doctor, saying,—

"Gentlemen, we are discussing subjects foreign to our ground of meeting. We agreed to tell each other our individual

history ; and our good Doctor is speaking now of things more or less abstruse, and about which each one of us has his own opinion. Let us go back to our original plan."

The Colonel passed his hand nervously across his brow, and remarked, "I doubt if there has been any departure from it. We all, even you, dear Banker, are agreed on one point: viz., that we are not perfectly happy ; and as the Doctor, once of the same opinion, is willing to tell us what occurred to change in him this state of things, and, moreover, as we know him to be a man of strong common sense, as well as one with great mental gifts, would it not be well for us, gentlemen, nay, is it not positively necessary, indispensable, that we should listen patiently and attentively as to the

way of attaining what at present, assuredly, is not ours?"

The Judge gravely and earnestly seconded this proposition, and the Doctor accordingly replied as follows,—

"One word, dear friends, ere I finish my story; but this word involves all. Even if man's excellence suffices for his fellow-man, before God it cannot stand. His grace, in the gift and revelation of Jesus Christ, shows us this."

An electric shock seemed to pass through the group around. Every eye looked down, and silence reigned for some moments.

"Yes, my friends," continued the Doctor, "the grace of God, and that alone. I knew nothing of this precious grace, and if I happened to hear it mentioned, like you all, nay, perhaps more than you all, I avoided

it with dislike. God was pleased to reveal it unto me in a most unexpected manner.

“I was sent for, by one of our peers, to hold a consultation with the family physician. The castle in which the Duke of —— resided was some leagues distant ; and as, when our consultation at twelve was over, it was decided we should again meet in the evening I was requested to stay at —— till the next day. In the course of the afternoon I sauntered into the park, and extended my walk as far as a farm-house at some distance, the door of which I was tempted, by mere curiosity, to open. It was here I was to find the way of peace, the only true happiness ; in fact, the knowledge of the love of God as revealed to man by and and in Jesus Christ.”

At these words, all present were much

moved; and as for myself, with a kind of alarm, mingled with an earnest desire to hear further, I involuntarily bent my head, and covered my face with both hands.

The Doctor perceived our emotion, and, in a subdued tone of voice, full of feeling, he continued,—

“In the farm parlour, where the greatest order and neatness prevailed, I was met by a young woman, who, without uttering a word, took my hand, and led me to an adjoining room, where, seated, or rather lying back, in a reclining arm chair, was her husband. On seeing me, he turned his head slowly towards me, and sighed deeply.

“‘The veriest chance brought me here,’ I observed. ‘But, as I happen to be a doctor, perhaps I can be of use to you.’

“‘In the wise orderings of God, there is

no such thing as chance,' was the sick man's reply, as he pointed to a chair, whereon I seated myself. 'All His ways towards us miserable sinners are ever full of mercy.'

"These remarks embarrassed me, and I felt within myself that the sick man possessed a faith, a feeling, to which I was a stranger. I was silent, confounded; nay, sat before him like a child."

"My dear Doctor," exclaimed the Statesman, "forgive me, but what had become of your common sense? Positively, the whole thing seems to me to savour of sorcery."

"Oh, dear friend," answered the Doctor, "I pray you recall that word! It was the grace of God meeting me. Hear me to the end. 'You do not answer me,' the invalid said. 'Do you not know the love of God, as revealed in our Saviour Jesus Christ?'

"By way of escaping from a direct reply, I said, 'Do *you* know this love?'

"With warmth he answered, 'Know it? O sir, what would become of me; what would become of my poor wife, without this love of God? Without the assurance of the grace of God in His Son, how could we have borne the past year's trials?'"

"The man was a mystic," whispered the Poet to the Banker, "and our poor Doctor deluded by him."

"Grievous, most grievous," was the reply.

"My dear Poet," said the Doctor, "I have heard your definition of my invalid farmer; but allow me to substitute the title of Christian, instead of mystic."

"Christian!" exclaimed the Poet, with some irritation. "And, pray, am not I; nay, *are we not* all Christians?"

“My dear friends,” replied the Doctor, with much gentleness, “when I entered that farm, I too thought I was a Christian. Soon I was undeceived. True, I had borne the name of Christian, having been baptized, and received into the Church of my country. As far as these outward privileges, I certainly was in a better position than an Arab, or a Jew. Education and social training, too, had led me to fulfil, more or less, the different duties pointed out by the Christian religion; and, in consequence, if any one had demurred at calling me a Christian, I should have been as indignant, nay, even more so than you, dear Poet. Yet it was in this interview with the dying farmer, from the lips of this humble sufferer, that I was to learn how utterly insufficient was my so-called religion; nay, that that religion was

not of God,—not that faith which is His gift, and which is the *heart's* faith in Jesus Christ."

Here two of our friends, the Banker and the Statesman, quietly rose and left the room. Only five, out of the eight at first assembled, remained; and the Doctor, earnestly looking at the two friends as they left us, sighed deeply as he remarked,—

"Many a time have I, in bygone days, quitted a room when I found the conversation was taking a serious turn. 'Tis not for me to condemn others. If God has spoken to them, He will, no doubt, do so again; for we know that there are seeds sown in the ground which lie long ere they germinate. In my case, the heavenly seed sown in my heart soon made its way through the clods of unbelief and worldly interestedness. In

the first place, I seemed constrained to remain at the farm. I could not leave the sick man; and his words to me, at once urgent and gentle, were but the echo of the following passage from a New Testament,—I think Dr. Pusey's Version,—which he kept close to him: 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.'

"'Believe these words, sir,' he used to say. 'Oh, why should you not accept them! Look, look too at this precious verse: 'And blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are covered.' As he uttered these words, he begged me, with an air almost of authority, to notice, or rather to mark, the chapters where they were to be found.'"

"But, dear Doctor," said the Poet,

"this farmer of yours must have been a theologian."

"He was a simple peasant," was the Doctor's answer. "All his knowledge was confined to that of the Gospel, and his theology, my dear friends, was summed up in believing that Gospel."

"Does the man still live?" inquired the Judge, in a tone of much interest.

"Happily for me he is alive," was the answer. "I had an interview with him only a few weeks ago, and yesterday, in writing to him, I did so as to my most valued friend."

"I have no difficulty in believing this," was the Colonel's remark. "'Tis not a little matter to have found the way,—yes, gentlemen,—the real way to heaven; and whoever teaches us that, has a right to our

heart's affection. But forgive my interruption, dear Doctor. Go on: go on with your history."

"All that remains for me to tell you, my dear friends," was the Doctor's reply, "is to repeat that I left the farmhouse an altered man. Not that I at once accepted all the sick man's words, but light had broken in upon my spirit, and I saw that sin consisted in doing the things which God had commanded us not to do, and that the pardon of sin could be found only in the Lord Jesus Christ. From that day, gentlemen, commenced my real happiness. In the New Testament I read that the Lord Jesus calls Himself the Shepherd, and His people His sheep; and, I can say, I claim my title to the latter."

"Do you really think, dear Doctor," I

asked, "that Jesus Christ Himself sees you from heaven, knows you personally; and, in fact, occupies Himself about you?"

"He has promised all this, my dear Professor," replied our friend. "And assuredly I have the witness of this truth in myself. One is backward to speak of oneself; but I must own that already I know something of that heart-communion with the Lord, of which the Scriptures speak, and which, like a seal on the soul, imprinted by the Holy Spirit, reminds the Christian every moment that holiness is the one aim of his life."

"Admirable!" exclaimed the Colonel. "I expected this: and this is what *I* want. Yes, gentlemen: I have felt, and to-day more than ever, that I need a religion which can give me two things: first, and

foremost, I must be *fully, freely* forgiven; and then, and as surely, I must have the desire and the power to do that which God Himself wishes should be done. Thanks, thanks, dear Doctor. Without wishing to disparage the experiences of our other friends, *your* history is, in my opinion, the best of all; and I hope to profit by it."

"Not so fast," quietly interposed the Judge. "You have, no doubt, dear friend, uttered excellent words; yet, in my opinion, there is one thing which you have not sufficiently explained."

"What is that?" meekly asked the Doctor. "I beg you to take me to task."

"Nay, nay," continued the Judge: "that I could not do; but I would ask, for my own enlightenment, if, in this pardon, in this free grace of God, as you call it,

the true Christian, since you give that appellation to the sincere follower of Jesus Christ, perseveres in living righteously. I mean, is he always desirous to fulfil those duties at which every man of integrity aims?"

"Thank you for putting that question," remarked the Poet. "It was one I meant to ask; for, gentlemen, I cannot hide from you the fear I have that this religion—this sentimental religion, shall I call it?—is too often a beautiful delusion. If, by these doctrines, the heart is affected, and soul lifted up above the things of time and sense, do we not find this is but a mere emotion, scarcely worth more than a pleasant theory, a fascinating speculation, and having little to do with the practical duties of life? In my opinion, religion, to

be worth anything, should lead to all that is actively benevolent."

"And you think right," was the Doctor's serious answer. "Everywhere we meet with men who, to use an apostle's words, 'profess that they know God, but in works deny Him.' We need but call to mind another apostle's declaration, 'Faith without works is dead:' which means, as we are told in another part of Scripture, that 'we lie if we say we have fellowship with God, whilst we walk in darkness.'"

"May I ask you, dear Doctor," said the Colonel, with an abashed look, "where the words you have quoted are to be found? It is my intention—yes: this very day—to purchase a New Testament, and, as you will understand, I should like to read over the words you have uttered."

Without hesitation the Doctor wrote down the following references: Titus i. 16, James ii. 26, and 1 John i. 6, and handed the paper to the Colonel, saying at the same time, with earnestness,—

“As well might we declare that the sun, when it rises, deepens the darkness, as even to imagine that the grace of God in the heart of man makes him forget holiness. For this reason, that I may answer our dear Judge’s remarks, you will allow me to add a few details of my own experience. In leaving the farm, I did so with the arrow, so to speak, which God had sent into my soul. That exclamation of the sick man, ‘Blessed are those whose sins are forgiven,’ specially followed me. You can easily believe that at the castle I hid all these feelings from those around me; but from my wife I kept

nothing back. And after telling her all that had passed, the only remark she made was, 'If this fire is from God it will not be extinguished.' Her words have been verified. The Spirit of God has fed the flame which He lit; for I can now, with humble assurance, say the grace of God is in my heart, and through the love of my Saviour, I shall be received, when my end comes, into the heavenly home prepared for those who believe."

Slowly, as if weighing each word, the Colonel observed,—

"You are, then, happy : really happy."

"Yes, my dear friend : I am so. Can it be otherwise, in trusting to the faithfulness of God ; to Him who, in giving me His Son, His only Son, has given me all things, both for time and for eternity ?"

"But, dear Doctor," interrupted the Poet, "in becoming a Christian, as you term it, you did not cease to be a man, which, being interpreted, means unstable, frail, and all the rest. In consequence, you cannot be exempt from cares, and ills, and sufferings. How does your state of happiness stand all this?"

"My dear friend," answered the Doctor, "did you not once describe to us, with eloquence and deep feeling, the scene you witnessed when that poor criminal, the very night before sentence was to be executed on him, received the king's pardon?"

"Yes, yes," the Poet replied: "that was indeed a reality. My own eyes looked on that delirium of joy. My ears heard those sobs of gratitude. And I thought, and said, 'Such feelings must surmount all other

emotions; and any other burden, however heavy, must lose its weight.'"

"What, then, shall be said," energetically replied the Doctor, "to the joy and transports of that man who, from God Himself, is taught that he is forgiven, loved by God even now, and that assuredly he shall, when he dies, be received into heaven, where his Saviour is expecting him? Will not such a joy enable him to fight against and overcome all other feelings? Will it not enable him to bear—nay, to triumph over—the cares, the sorrows, the many countless trials with which life is fraught?"

In that subdued tone of voice which tells of a desire to be taught, the Colonel said, "You have no fear of death, then."

"What you call the end, dear Colonel, I call the beginning," was the Doctor's answer.

"But, my dear friend," interrupted the Judge, "you have not satisfied my request. Integrity, purity, obedience to the whole law of God,—these are the things I consider needful. Is the faith, of which you speak so much, as able to triumph over sins and faults as it has the power of imparting happiness?"

"All that I can answer to this," said the Doctor, "is that the gentleness, the patience, the quiet peace and complete resignation of the farmer and his wife convinced me that the belief they professed acted on their hearts. And, since I have read the Word of God for myself, the more I see, in almost every line, that the heart's belief sanctifies the heart. In other words, the most virtuous man is the real decided Christian."

"It must be so!" exclaimed the Poet.

“Gratitude can but be evinced by striving to please one’s benefactor. It would thus be impossible to believe in God’s free forgiveness without earnestly desiring to obey Him.”

“Ah, my friend, if I looked only to my own unstable heart for a love to God, which should evince itself by obedience, little comfort would be mine; but it is the Holy Spirit Himself who guides the disciple of Jesus, and who works in him that holiness without which no man shall see God!”

“I exclaimed, “What a mystery is this belief! How deep it is! My dear Doctor, you have been able to understand it; but what is to become of the ignorant, the uneducated, the simple-minded?”

“Dear friend, were not the farmer and

his wife of this class; and was it not from them that I learnt that true happiness consists in being loved by God? If He touches the heart and opens it, can He not, be that heart what it may, shed abroad into it His love—His life?"

"This is evident," remarked the Colonel, as he turned towards me. "If those poor people, whom last winter I had the pleasure of helping with wood and clothes, seemed at a loss to thank me sufficiently, and to this day beg me at any time to command their services, will not a man, to whom God has shown mercy, love Him with all his heart? In other words, so it seems to me, will he not wish to live for God alone?"

"Listen to me, dear friend," answered the Doctor. "As surely as the magnet attracts steel to itself, so does the love of

the Saviour in our hearts draw us to please Him. Ah, let this love once take possession of the soul, and that soul will soon learn that earth is no longer to be preferred: heaven is its home!"

"I am, then, to understand, dear Doctor," said the Judge, "that, Christian as you feel and declare yourself to be, you are as scrupulous in regard to morality and to duty as if you had not the assurance of pardon; that freedom from condemnation does not produce carelessness or license to sin?"

"Oh, dear, dear friend," answered the Doctor, "believe me, I am a thousand times more careful to avoid all sin; yea, the least departure from holiness, since I knew the love of the Lord Jesus! It is because I no longer have a dread of God,

that to think of Him is happiness; and, because He forgives so freely, so fully, so continually, that my one aim is not to disobey Him in any way."

Here the Colonel rose, and, taking rapid strides across the room, exclaimed, energetically, "I understand: I grasp it all! Yes, yes: I see it, at once self-controlling, powerful; yet gentle and persuasive! My friends, there is enough here to make us happy: to know that God is our God—no longer to dread the end—that inevitable end which draws nigh!"

"Ah," added I: "and no longer to fear that solemn judgment day—the terrible sentence; the awful issue of the same!"

At this moment a distant clock struck, and the Doctor, hastily looking at his watch, begged us to excuse his leaving us.

He quitted the room, and for some minutes there was a profound silence, broken only by the Colonel's exclamation, as, from the window, he had watched the Doctor's receding form, "Excellent man: may God bless and protect you!"

"What do you mean?" asked the Poet, as he drew near to the Colonel.

"Do you see that miserable abode," was the reply, "just behind the magnificent hotel? It is to that wretched hut our dear friend has gone in such haste. Neither gold nor renown awaits him there. His patient is a poor, miserable object, whose body is a mass of disease."

The Poet walked slowly back to his seat, and exclaimed,—

"Truly there is reality in this religion! No mere sentimentality, no mysticism; but

something positive, practical! And all this in a man of the highest intellect; nay, a genius in every sense! 'Tis beyond me: it overpowers me!"

"Be this as it may," remarked the Judge, "the Doctor is really happy, and this is the important part to us; for, gentlemen, what was the object of our meeting, and what has been the confession of each heart? We have sketched our past histories, and have acknowledged to a want of real happiness. One has spoken of his '*ennui*,' his weariness, his disgust in the midst of prosperity. Another has avowed how often his merriment was forced, artificial, more like that of the drunkard shouting some song of folly as the ship, on which he is, gradually sinks into the deep. We all have acknowledged a dread, a shrinking from

that time when, whether we will or no, a farewell must be given to friends, to wealth, to renown; nay, to life,—our life. Ah, and in addition to this, as justly observed our dear Professor, after this we must appear before that Judge who knows all things, has seen all; yea, the very thoughts of our hearts! He will have forgotten nothing, and none can deceive Him. You and I, gentlemen, have declared all this, and let our success, our talents, our home joys be what they may, we are not, we cannot, be really happy. On the other hand, we have heard from the lips of a man in whose perfect sincerity we all have implicit confidence, and on whose judgment we can depend, that he has found, and has secured, solid happiness and peace. Therefore the end of life, which so distresses us, and the judgment which so

alarms us, have no terrors for him; nay, he looks forward to death as to a day of rejoicing. Ah, most assuredly, our dear Doctor has chosen a good part, and it ought to be our earnest desire to do the same!"

The Poet sighed deeply, and said,—

"I again repeat, there is in all this something superhuman, and I ask myself, 'What is it?'"

The venerable Judge replied,—

"I believe it to be what he himself declared to have found in his visit to the farm house,—a true faith."

"But, my dear Judge," said the Colonel, as he drew his chair close to his old friend, "what *is* this faith: tell us in what does its possession consist?"

"You would have done better had you put that question to the Doctor rather than

to me. However, I will do my best to give you my impression of this faith. It seems to me that faith enables us rightly to know God, and so to believe implicitly in all He tells us. For instance, He has declared in His Word that all that is of this world is uncertain, changeable, and unsatisfying. As decidedly does He pronounce that man, even at his best, has sin in his heart, and that that sin is hateful to God who sees and condemns it. On the other hand, this same sin-hating God declares that, in the person of His own Son, He has given us a Saviour, a Redeemer; and through the Lord Jesus Christ, not only pardon is freely and fully given to each man who seeks it, but a home in heaven. These are, dear Colonel, the offer and promises of God. And I can understand that a belief in all this goes in

the New Testament by the name of 'faith,'—that faith which the Doctor told us he possessed, and which we see so plainly makes him perfectly happy."

The Colonel rose from his seat, and once again paced up and down the room, exclaiming,—

"The whole is summed up in this: first, we must be sure God *has* said all this; then we must believe and submit to His Word. Well might the Professor exclaim, 'What a mystery: such knowledge *must* come from heaven!' In the world, in the army, in our most literary assemblies, who speaks of it? Nay, they are ignorant of these wondrous truths!"

"Gentlemen," exclaimed the Poet, "let us be true and upright in this matter. Our dear Doctor told us that it was from the

Word of God that farmer read to him, that in that Word he himself found all that the sick man had said confirmed, and that that Word showed him that to love God was to have the heart drawn to all that was noble, and excellent, and beautiful. Let us accept his declaration; and, in order to do this, let us read this wonderful Word, and allow it to teach and to lead us. Before you all, I declare that this is my intention."

"Professor," exclaimed the Colonel, as he approached me, "are you prepared to say the same?"

"Yes, my dear friend," was my reply. "I am persuaded that from God alone can come peace, instead of terror, when thinking of the future—the final judgment. And when, from the lips of such a man as the Doctor, I hear that he too once dreaded

death, and still more the judgment of God, and that now he has, from the Word of God, received light, peace, assurance, I am decided in accepting such a witness; and, from this day, I purpose following the Colonel's declaration made a little while ago, and shall make myself the possessor of a Bible. May God enable me to understand all I read."

"I am one with you, dear friends," observed the Judge, "and that from my very heart. Already, I must tell you, I have read much of this wonderful Book, and from it have received—at least, such is my hope—a desire to know better the love of God in Jesus Christ. But, to read the Bible, I find it not sufficient to accept the mere letter of the Word, but I must receive it in my heart as the very Word of my

Creator and my God. Thus, God helping me, I mean, from henceforth, to read and earnestly trust to reap benefit to my soul."

We all rose, and were about to separate, when the Poet, motioning to us with his hand that he again wished to address us, uttered the following words, in tones full of seriousness and affection,—

"Perhaps, a few years hence, we may again meet to renew our conversation. Will it be to tell each other how we have read this Word of God ; how it has penetrated our hearts ; how, in one word, we have profited by the solemn truths which have this day been heard by us ?"

Our only reply was a fervent pressure of the Poet's hand. And thus terminated a meeting from which, at least, one of us has been able to say, "*I am* happy : quite happy !"

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